

**PROMOTING A POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THROUGH A  
LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP MATCH**

**EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Monterey Park Fire Department, a 62-member full-service municipal Fire Department, was developing what the Fire Chief termed “an identity crises.” The culture of the Fire Department and morale were declining. Employee attrition (specifically, incumbent firefighters separating service with the City of Monterey Park to accept employment with other fire agencies), employee apathy, resistance to change, lack of discipline, lower than average wages, and less than adequate benefits were issues facing fire management.

The problem this research project addressed was the fact that the Monterey Park Fire Department, in its 73-year history, had never identified the leadership and followership styles that may promote a positive organizational culture.

The purpose of this applied research was to identify the predominant leadership style and the predominant followership style in an effort to promote a positive organizational culture.

Utilizing descriptive research methodologies the following research questions, as they related to the Monterey Park Fire Department, were asked:

- 1) What are the predominant cultural characteristics?
- 2) What is the predominant leadership style?
- 3) What is the predominant followership style?
- 4) What means, if any, can be taken to reinforce and strengthen the organizational culture?

The procedures used for this applied research project included interviews, phone and

electronic mail consultation, surveys, and literature review. The results indicated that the culture of the department was weak and the predominant followership style did not correlate with the predominant leadership style, leading to the issue of a weak organizational culture.

Recommendations were made to obtain consensus, from the followers and the leader, of the need for improvement and to begin a team-building process. The team-building process would utilize a consultant to begin the long and arduous process. Re-evaluation of the follower and leadership styles was recommended annually. Emphasis for improvements in leader characteristics included capable management, leadership communication, confident leadership, follower-centered leadership, and principled leadership. And the followers of the Department were encouraged to move from a subordinate role to a partnership role within the organization.

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's complex workplace, success is directly related to team effectiveness and the make-up of the team is a reflection of the organizational culture (Cohen, 1990). Childress and Senn have noted that "never before in the history of business has the impact of organizational culture been more crucial to the success of organizations and the effectiveness of individuals leading them" (1999, p. vii). Equally important, however, is the relationship that exists between the leaders and the followers and how these relationships effect the organizational culture (Belasco and Stayer, 1993; Chaleff, 1995, Rosenbach and Taylor, 2001; and Yukl 2002). It is not enough to merely study individual characteristics of leaders and followers in today's rapidly changing organizations as a means for organizational improvement, because according to Kelley, "The roles of followers and leaders are no longer as clearly demarcated as they used to be. We need to acknowledge both parts of ourselves" (1992, p. 9). If the organizational goal is to create a healthier, more balanced high-performance culture, then that organization must be able to identify and develop the values and behaviors, of both leaders and followers, necessary to create high-performance teams (Childress and Senn, 1999).

The problem this research project addresses is the fact that the Monterey Park Fire Department, in its 73-year history, has never identified the leadership and followership styles that may promote a positive organizational culture. Kelley contends that "In reality, followership and leadership are two separate roles. They are complementary, not competitive, paths to organizational contributions" (1992, p. 41). However, Chaleff has noted that "whenever an organization lies on the spectrum from hierarchical to shared leadership, there is always some power vested in the leaders and some in the followers"

(1995, p. 15). By examining both roles and identifying both styles, it may be possible to develop a strategy to improve the culture (Cohen, 1990).

The purpose of this applied research is to identify the predominant leadership style and the predominant followership style in an effort to promote a positive organizational culture. As the leadership style is examined, bear in mind the concept of Rosenbach and Taylor who have identified a “new model for leadership in public organizations that focuses on the relationship between the culture of the subordinates in the organization; the situational context, or environmental, in which the organization operates (i.e., crises); and the leadership essential to facilitate effectiveness” (2001, p. 115). Concurrently, it should be noted that Chaleff has identified that “follower is not a term of weakness, but the condition that permits leadership to exist and gives it strength” (1995, p. 17). This study utilized descriptive research methodologies to answer the following research questions as they relate to the Monterey Park Fire Department:

- 1) What are the predominant cultural characteristics?
- 2) What is the predominant leadership style?
- 3) What is the predominant followership style?
- 4) What means, if any, can be taken to reinforce and strengthen the organizational culture?

These four questions not only relate to the Monterey Park Fire Department but play an important role in correcting a potentially dangerous attitude of the firefighters, in regards to safety, that will be addressed in the following background and significance section.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Monterey Park Fire Department is located six miles east of downtown Los Angeles, California and employs 62 full-time, paid members that serve approximately 61,000 residents. The Department provides a multitude of services to the community, including fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention, hazardous material response, public education and arson investigation. In addition, the Department is the lead agency for all city-wide disaster preparedness and the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). Operating from three fire stations, the Department responded to 3,485 calls for service while completing 22,500 hours of in-service training. The Department has maintained services with an operating budget of \$6,589,200 while attempting to sustain an adequate experience level within the ranks (*Monterey Park Fire Department Annual Report, 2000*).

In a December of 2000 senior staff meeting, the Fire Chief of the Monterey Park Fire Department discussed setting goals and objectives for the fiscal year 2001-2002 budget (the fiscal year started July 1, 2001 and ended June 31, 2002). This was a standard budget preparation meeting held each year between the Fire Chief, four Battalion Chief's and the Department's Administrative Assistant. The main topic of discussion was the need for a comprehensive team-building session between Fire Management and Monterey Park Firefighter's Union Representatives. The purpose of including this team-building session as a goal of the fiscal year 2001-2002 budget was to assure completion, in that each year the City Council scrutinized the budget goals and objectives to assure compliance. For nearly one hour, discussion centered around the culture of the fire department and how morale seemed to be declining. Employee attrition (specifically, incumbent firefighters separating service with the City of Monterey Park to accept employment with other fire agencies), employee apathy,



resistance to change, lack of discipline, lower than average wages, and less than adequate benefits were discussed as part of the problems facing fire management. Consensus from all members present at the senior staff meeting was reached that the morale problem, which had steadily grown over several years, would continue unless positive action was taken. It was determined that a team-building session would be beneficial to the Department's morale as the leadership looked at new ways to improve effectiveness while attempting to positively influence an unsatisfied workforce (Tim Murphy, Fire Chief, Monterey Park Fire Department, personal communications, March 14, 2002).

Following attendance at the National Fire Academy's *Executive Development* course in January of 2001, this researcher approached the Monterey Park Fire Chief with the idea of pursuing an alternative means of team-building. It was discussed that the main focus on previous Monterey Park Fire Department team-building sessions had been to look at leadership and the effects that leadership had on the organization (Tim Murphy, Fire Chief, Monterey Park Fire Department, personal communications, March 14, 2002). The new idea would expound on the concept that leadership was not the sole determining factor in influencing organizational culture. Further discussion with the Fire Chief focused on the concept that "most managers are leaders and followers, but because of the emphasis on, and preoccupation with, leadership, the follower role, which dominates our professional lives but not our thinking, often is ignored" (National Fire Academy, 1998 *Executive Development* Student Manual p. 5-5). Furthermore, the idea of identifying predominant followership styles, and attempting to match them to predominant leadership styles as a means to improve the organizational culture, had never been done. The Following and Leading topic contained in Unit 5 and the Organizational Culture topic contained in Unit 7 of the National Fire Academy *Executive Development* course would

justify the inherent good of performing this research which could promote a positive organizational culture. As was expressed to the Fire Chief, a positive organizational culture could lead to decreased employee apathy, less resistance to change, and heightened discipline. Ultimately, this new organizational culture would provide for a more satisfied workforce and lead to safer work practices (Tim Murphy, Fire Chief, Monterey Park Fire Department, personal communications, March 14, 2002). A safer workforce could aid in meeting one of the United States Fire Administrations operational objectives to “reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters” (National Fire Academy, 2001, Executive Fire Officer Program Operational Policies and Procedures, p. II-2). This critical operational objective played an important role of keeping the focus of the next section, literature review, as the safety of all Monterey Park Firefighters was strongly tied to employee satisfaction.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review was conducted to understand and analyze the myriad of leadership and followership concepts affecting the culture of an organization but more importantly to bridge a conceptual gap between the two styles. In doing so, the bridging of this gap would give the followers of the organization a renewed sense of organizational importance while giving the leadership a new opportunity for organizational improvement. Ultimately, the linkage between leadership and followership would prove beneficial in reinforcing a weakened organizational culture.

### **Cultural Characteristics**

It is important to understand the nature of organizational culture in order to gain a broader perspective of why organizations act and react the way they do. (Schein, 1992) defines the culture of an organization as shared assumptions and belief about the world and their place

in it, the nature of time and space, human nature, and human relationships. Furthermore, according to Yukl, “the underlying beliefs representing the culture of a group or organization are learned responses to problems of survival in the external environment and problems of the internal integration” (2002, p. 279). It is these learned responses, passed down from generation to generation, that create the fiber of the culture and explain as Yukl has done “why many of the underlying beliefs and assumptions are implicit and unconscious” (2002, p. 283). The aim was to contest these implicit and unconscious beliefs and assumptions with the hope of allowing a creative culture to emerge; a culture committed to broadening participation, diverse perspective and challenge of the status quo (Chaleff, 1995). Only then can the organizational characteristics be truly examined and change embraced.

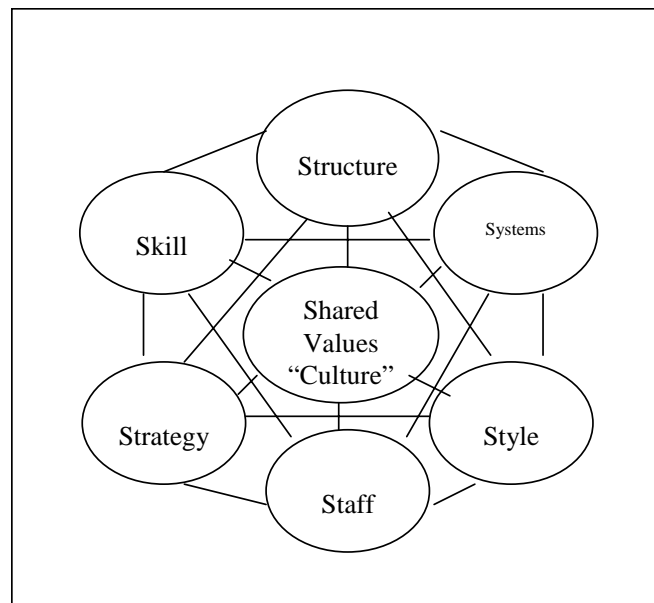
Organizational effectiveness is greatly affected by the culture, as Childress and Senn have noted in that, “high performance cultures are a launching pad for new initiatives. Winning behaviors like a can-do spirit, bias for action, collaboration, mutual support, passion for the customer, openness to change, innovation, and positive attitude support the success of any initiative” (1999, p. 19). The difficulty in building or sustaining a winning culture is determining the characteristics that create the foundation. Childress and Senn used, “McKinsey and Co’s 7S model to evaluate excellent companies. Table 1 shows how the model contains three objective, or hard Ss, and four subjective, or soft ones” (1999, p. 20).

**Table 1**  
**McKinsey 7 Ss**

<p><b><u>3 Objective or Hard Ss</u></b></p> <p>Strategy - plans and Strategies</p> <p>Structure - organizational chart</p> <p>Systems - procedures</p> <p><b><u>4 Subjective or Soft Ss</u></b></p> <p>Staff - type of personnel</p> <p>Style - style of management</p> <p>Skills - both interpersonal and technical</p> <p>Shared Values - culture</p>
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It is important to note that beyond the existence of the three objectives or “hard Ss” of strategy, structure and systems and the four subjective or “soft Ss” of staff, style, skills and shared values, there is constant flex and interaction between all aspects which further adds to the effectiveness of an organization. As is noted in figure 1, all components of the model are aimed at and are an integral part of the target, that being shared values or the “culture” of an organization.

**Figure 1**  
**The 7-S FRAMEWORK**




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**Note.** Figure by Childress and Senn, *The Secret of a Winning Culture*, p. 42.

### **Leadership Style**

Leadership has produced as many definitions as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept. Table 2, obtained from (Yukl, 2002), illustrates the point and demonstrates that definitions have varied over the years. However, as one narrows the focus, it becomes clear that leadership can be thought of as both a process and a concept. According to Gebhardt and Townsend “to fully appreciate the depth and

breadth of the meaning of leadership, one must consider it not only in relationship to management, but also as a standalone concept” (1997, p. 11). Leadership is so fundamental to organizational effectiveness that almost every industry and profession demands leadership first and management second (Covey, 1989). What becomes difficult, then, is not realizing the importance of leadership, rather realizing the function of leadership as noted in Table 2, Definitions of Leadership.

**Table 2**  
**Definitions of Leadership**

1.	Leadership is “the behavior of an individual...directing the activities of a group towards a shared goal” (Hemphill & Coons, 1957, p. 7).
2.	Leadership is “the influential incremental over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization” (D. Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 528).
3.	“Leadership is exercised when persons...mobilize...institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 18).
4.	Leadership is “the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement” (Rauch & Behling, 1984, p. 46).
5.	“Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose” (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990, p.281).
6.	Leadership “is the ability to step outside the culture...to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive” (E.H. Schein, 1992, p. 2).
7.	“Leadership is the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed (Drath & Palus, 1994, p. 4).
8.	“Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished” (Richards & Engle, 1986, p. 206).
9.	Leadership is “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organization...” (House et al., 1999, p. 184).

**Note.** Table by author, with citations by Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, p. 184.

Kouzes and Posner describe the essence of leadership as follows:

Leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow. Any discussion of leadership must attend to the dynamics of this relationship. Strategies, tactics, skills, and practices are empty unless we understand the fundamental human aspirations that connect leaders and their constituents. If there is no underlying need for relationship, then there is no need for leadership (1993, p. 1).

Many experts challenge this definition of leadership, citing leadership more as a specialized role than as a social function (Yukl, 2002). Ultimately what must become apparent in any analysis of leadership is the context in which it is to be applied.

For many years, the driving force behind the study of leadership focused on examining approaches, traits, behaviors and situations. These concepts all had merit, but it was not until the introduction of the transactional and transformational leadership concept that two distinct styles began to emerge. According to Rosenbach and Taylor, “transactional leadership is the equitable transaction or exchange between the leader and followers whereby the leader influences the followers by focusing on the self interest of both” (2001, p. 2). Rosenbach and Taylor also described transformational leadership as:

Involving strong personal identification of followers with the leader...transformational leaders motivate followers to perform beyond expectations by creating an awareness of the importance of mission and the vision in such a way that followers share beliefs and values and are able to transcend self-interests and tie the vision to the higher order interest of self-esteem and self-actualization (2001, p. 2).

By keying in on the dimensions of transformational leadership behavior and transformational leadership characteristics, it begins to shed light on the importance of the relationship between the leader and the follower and the effects that relationship can have on the culture of the organization. After all, according to Belasco and Stayer, “leadership is making it possible for others to follow by thinking strategically and focusing on the right direction, removing the obstacles, developing ownership and taking self-directed action” (1993, p. 89).

### **Followership Style**

Unlike leadership, followership has not gained the notoriety and publicity as leadership has gained, in terms of analysis, definition and study, however, the relationship between leadership and followership is evident. According to Gebhardt and Townsend, “followership needs to be nurtured and fostered as leadership has been. Leaders are useless without followers, marginally effective with apathetic followers, and most effective when the followers are as professional in their attitude toward followership as the leaders are about leadership” (1997, p. 45). Followership and leadership should not be considered at odds with one another as Kelley notes, “Neither role corners the market on brains, motivation, talent, or action” (1992, p. 41). The question should not be whether or not to recognize followership, but rather what kind of followers does the organization want. Table 3 identifies guidelines for followers that Gebhardt and Townsend view as important.

**Table 3**  
**Guidelines For Followers**

1.	Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
2.	Be technically and tactically proficient.
3.	Comply with orders and initiate appropriate actions in the absence of orders.
4.	Develop a sense of responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.
5.	Make sound and timely decisions or recommendations.
6.	Set the example for others.
7.	Be familiar with your leader and his job, and anticipate his requirements.
8.	Keep your leaders informed.
9.	Understand the task and ethically accomplish it.
10.	Be a team member-but not a yes man.

**Note.** Table by Townsend and Gebhardt, *Five Star Leadership*, p. 48.

These guidelines form the boundaries in which effective followers flourish, however, it is important to consider the characteristics of effective followers as well.

For many people the role of follower is a conscious choice. They understand the organizational need for effective followers and moreover, they understand the characteristics that effective followers must possess. Kelly has identified six characteristics of effective followers which are shown in table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Effective Follower Characteristics**

Self-Management & Control -	Thinks for oneself, accepts responsibility; willingness to disagree openly.
Commitment -	To a cause, idea, product, service or organization.
Competence -	Master skills useful to organization; adheres to high performance standards; life-long continued education; sees colleagues as co-workers, not competition.
Courage -	Insightful, candid & fearless; forms own views & ethical standards.
Contribution -	Takes on extra work gladly; high performance & high quality work.
Credibility -	Possess established trust, knowledge & judgment; gives credit where credit is due; admits mistakes.

**Note.** Table by author.



As one can see, the six characteristics listed are of great importance in building a competent follower. And as Yukl has identified “motivated, competent followers are necessary for the successful performance of work carried out by the leaders unit” (2002, p. 289). It is from these guidelines and characteristics that a basis is formed in which to identify the style of followership one provides.

Based on the Performance Relationship Questionnaire developed by Rosenback, Potter and Pittman, follower styles can be evaluated and identified in pursuit of determining areas for improvement or organizational match. The Performance Relationship Questionnaire is an instrument that examines two factors; relationship initiative and performance initiative. The relationship initiative analyzes the four components of negotiating differences, building trust, courageous communication, and identifying with others. The performance initiative analyzes the four components of doing the job, embracing change, self as a resource, and working with others. From these eight components a followership profile is determined with the goal of developing what Gebhardt and Townsend refer to as “exemplary followers, those who are both actively engaged with their leaders and their environment and who exhibit independent, critical thinking” (1997, p. 49).

## **Summary**

The literature review was essential to this study in that it provided direction and focus for an otherwise extremely broad topic. Additionally, the literature review shed light onto several organizational problems, not unlike the problems faced by the Monterey Park Fire Department, and gave credibility to the inherent good this research study could provide for the organization. Prior to the literature review, there was much

trepidation felt by the researcher as to whether a definitive linkage could be found between leadership and followership, and much to the surprise and fulfillment of the researcher, commonality was discovered. In fact, as Chaleff has identified, “like the leader, the follower is the steward of the resources an organization can draw on to carry out its work. The resources of a group include its leaders. Thus, a follower is a leader’s steward every bit as much as a leader is the follower’s steward” (1995, p. 13).

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Literature Review**

Research and data collection began with a literature review at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center in January 2002. Many articles in fire service trade magazines, technical reports and previous Executive Fire Officer applied research projects were found that addressed Leadership with lesser articles and reports identifying followership and organizational culture. However, none of the reports specifically identified linkage between the three concepts. A detailed literature review was conducted at the California State University, Los Angeles Library in February, March, and April 2002 and a literature review was conducted at the City of Huntington Beach, California Central Library in April 2002.

### **Personal Interviews**

Two personal interviews were conducted to provide relevant data for this applied research project. The first interview was conducted on March 14, 2002 with Tim Murphy, Fire Chief for the City of Monterey Park Fire Department to gain background knowledge on the reason a team-building exercise was included in the 2001-2002 budget. Additionally, a second interview was conducted on March 15, 2002 with Robert

Blackwood, Human Resources Director for the City of Monterey Park to gain insight into the culture of the Monterey Park Fire Department based on salary, benefits, attrition, and worker satisfaction.

### **Consultation**

Phone and electronic-mail consultation was conducted with William E. Rosenbach, professor of management at Gettsyberg College in February 2002. Based on information discovered during the literature review, as well as course material contained in unit 5 of the National Fire Academy, 1999, *Executive Development* Student Manual, it was determined that Mr. Rosenbach could be considered a reliable source for current and relevant data in the field of leadership and followership and was instrumental in providing guidance to this researcher in the form of validated test surveys.

### **Surveys**

Two validated surveys, administered by Mr. Rosenbach, were utilized as the foundation for data collection in terms of predominant leadership style and predominant followership style. In regards to the predominant culture, this researcher administered The Corporate Cultural Audit. The Leadership Profile survey developed by Rosenbach, Sashkin and Harburg was administered to the Fire Chief of the Monterey Park Fire Department and seven participants in developing a profile of the Fire Chief's transactional and transformational leadership behaviors and characteristics. The Fire Chief took the self-assessment survey answering the questions as he sees himself in the leadership role and these results were compared to the results of seven department members selected to take the same survey as observers. The observers were asked to rate their interpretation of the Fire Chief's leadership abilities. Mr. Rosenbach, providing an

adequate cross-section view of the organizational leadership, recommended the population for this survey, which included two Captains, one Engineer, one Firefighter Paramedic, one Firefighter, one Fire Prevention Specialist, and one Administrative Assistant.

Concurrently, 36 Performance Relationship Questionnaires surveys, developed by Rosenbach, Potter and Pittman, were administered to various “non-administrative” fire personnel. This included members of all ranks (Captains, Engineers, Firefighter Paramedics and Firefighters), except Chief Officers. The results of the Performance Relationship Questionnaire gave a followership profile in regards to the Monterey Park Fire Department’s relationship initiative and performance initiative. Finally, a Corporate Culture Audit developed by Senn-Delaney Leadership Consulting Group, Inc. was administered to the same 36 “non-administrative” fire personnel who voluntarily agreed to take the Performance Relationship Questionnaire. Disseminating both surveys to all personnel and asking for voluntary re-submittal determined the population of the Performance Relationship Questionnaire and the Corporate Cultural Audit. This technique of developing a voluntary sample supported an evaluation of the number of personnel willing to actively participate in a process, ultimately aiding in the evaluation of the organizational culture (less than 60 percent of the organization was willing to participate).

All surveys, with the exception of the survey taken by the Fire Chief, were completely anonymous and had the support and approval of the Fire Chief, as well as the support of the Monterey Park Firefighter’s Union.

## **Assumptions and Limitations**

An assumption was made that all respondents to the surveys understood the questions and had the knowledge and desire to answer them accurately and truthfully. Another assumption was that the respondents understood that the surveys were anonymous and that the results would not and could not be used to affect their position within the organization, thereby skewing their responses.

Several limitations impacted the study. First, The Leadership Profile survey was restricted to the Fire Chief and seven selected participants. The seven participants represented nearly all ranks within the department, including fire prevention and administrative staff (Chief Officers were excluded). The profile did not include a group leadership profile that would take into account three Battalion Chief's and one Fire Marshal who have limited influence on the leadership within the department. The profile also neglected 55 department members of various rank. Secondly, The Performance Relationship Questionnaire survey was administered on a voluntary basis to all 62 full-time employees and only 36 of the 62, or 58 percent, employees responded. This limited the representation of the survey. Finally, this author, following the instructions by Childress and Senn, *The Secrets of a Winning Culture*, p. 79, administered The Corporate Culture Audit. The survey was part of a book exercise that encouraged participation by members of a "team," identifying cultural characteristics. The results were not tabulated by the Senn-Delaney Leadership Consulting Group, Inc. and could be construed as inaccurate. Nonetheless, it was an objective and consistent means to develop a group profile of the organizations cultural strengths and weaknesses.

## Definition of Terms

**Building Trust.** A follower relationship initiative where individuals work with the intent to build the kind of trust that leads other to give honest feedback, share plans, doubts and rely on you. Earns the leaders confidence.

**Capable Management.** A transactional leadership scale that measures how well the leader accomplishes the day-to-day basic administrative or managerial tasks.

**Caring Leadership.** A transformational behavior that identifies the degree to which leader demonstrates respect and concern for others.

**Communication Leadership.** A transformational behavior that identifies the ability to manage and direct the attention of others through clear and focused interpersonal communication.

**Confident Leadership.** A transformational characteristic of having a basic sense of self-assurance and an underlying belief that the leader can personally make a difference and have an impact on people.

**Contributor.** A style of follower who behaves in an exemplary way, works hard and is known for the quality of his or her work. This person rarely seeks the perspective of the boss, however, and generally waits for direction before turning to new challenges.

**Courageous Communication.** A follower relationship initiative where individuals tell the truth when others may not like to hear the truth in order to serve the goals of the organization and, in the end, the person to whom you have told the truth. Seeks honest feed back from others.

**Creative Leadership.** A transformational behavior that identifies the willingness to take risks, albeit risk based on careful thought and assessment, and creating opportunity. Empowering followers by encouraging and allowing them to accept challenges.

**Credible Leadership.** A transformational behavior that identifies a leaders perceived integrity. Is the leader reliable, keeping commitments and promises? Are the leaders words consistent with his or her actions?

**Doing The Job.** A follower performance initiative where individuals know what is expected and strive to be the best. Work is important and an integral part of ones life. Applies the highest standards from which satisfaction is derived.

**Embracing Change.** A follower performance initiative highlighted by individuals committed to continuous quality improvement, seeking to reduce wasted time and energy and anticipating orders while leading by example.

**Follower-Centered Leadership.** A transformational characteristic of sharing power with followers so that the follower can take an active role in achieving group goals.

**Follower Performance Initiatives.** One of two dimensions that identify and describe the behaviors that lead to the follower profile. The performance initiative behaviors acknowledge that effective partners are committed to high performance and the follower's future is dependent on the future of the organization.

**Follower Relationship Initiatives.** One of two dimensions that identify and describe the behaviors that lead to the follower profile. The relationship initiative behaviors acknowledge that effective partners understand that they share the responsibility for the relationship which defines the partnership.

**Identifying With The Leader.** A follower relationship initiative where individuals are loyal to the person whose success is tied to one's own. Identifies with the leader and takes satisfaction from the leaders success.

**Negotiating Differences.** A follower relationship initiative where individuals recognize honest differences of opinions, present the facts as he or she sees them and attempts to negotiate a position acceptable to the leader as well as the follower. Demonstrates mature and unselfish judgment.

**Partner.** A style of follower committed to high performance and effective relationships. Gains the kind of understanding that leads to plans and actions that anticipate new directions and contributions that serve unmet needs. Organizations that anticipate and keep pace with change in the global environment are characterized by leaders who encourage partnership and followers who seek to be partners.

**Performance and Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ).** A valid test instrument consisting of 50 statements that help leaders and followers assess the quality of their partnership by profiling performance initiatives (embracing change, self as a resource, working with others and doing the job) and relationship initiatives (courageous communication, building trust, negotiating differences and identifying with the leader).

**Politician.** A style of follower who gives more attention to managing relationships than to maximizing performance. This person possesses valuable interpersonal qualities that are often misdirected or misunderstood.

**Principled Leadership.** A transformational characteristic of a leaders ability to help develop and support certain shared values and beliefs among group members.

**Reward Equity.** A transactional leadership scale that measures the degree to which leaders make clear and explicit their goal and performance expectations.

**Self as a Resource.** A follower performance initiative where individuals understand themselves as a valuable and limited resource and take care to protect the asset for the future. Avoids stagnations and burn-out.

**Subordinate.** A style of follower who does what he or she is told—competent at a satisfactory level but not one to whom the organization looks for leadership or to whom challenging assignments are given. The “traditional” follower.

**The Leader Profile.** A valid test instrument consisting of 50 statements that score a leaders transactional components (capable management and reward equity), as well as a leaders transformational behaviors (communication, credibility, caring and creativity) and transformational characteristics (confidence, follower-centered, vision and principle).

**Transactional Leadership.** A style of leadership in which the leader influences the follower by means of a transaction. That is, they give followers money, praise, or some other reward (or punishment in exchange for the followers effort or performance).

**Transformational Leadership.** A style of leadership, which involves the followers having a strong personal identification with the leader. Followers join in a shared vision of the future, going beyond self-interest and the pursuit of personal rewards.

**Visionary Leadership.** A transformational characteristic of a leaders ability to define and express clearly a future for the group or organization.

**Working With Others.** A follower performance initiative where individuals are able to balance personal interest with the interests of others, while discovering common purpose and drawing upon interpersonal skills to support the development of an effective team. Coaches, leads, mentors and shares expertise.

## **RESULTS**

The literature review, personal interview with the Monterey Park Fire Chief and the City of Monterey Park Human Resources Director, as well as consultation with William Rosenbach, and the completion of two surveys provide the following results:

### **Question One**

What are the predominant cultural characteristics?

Identifying cultural characteristics can be a difficult task as substantiated by Yukl who states “It is difficult to dig beneath the superficial layer of espoused values to discover the underlying beliefs and assumptions, some of which may be unconscious”



(2002, p. 278-279). Nonetheless, cultural characteristics can be identified through various methods. According to Kouzes and Posner “in high-performing, strong-culture organizations, cooperative teamwork begins even before the first day on the job...and carries through into promotion” (1993, p. 136). Recruiting and hiring practices, orientation, training and development, and promotions are relevant systems to reinforce shared values. Coupled with pay and benefits, one begins to develop a clear picture of the organizational culture.

The Monterey Park Fire Department ranks second to last of the 14 comparable cities surveyed in regards to pay and benefits. Employee attrition continues to plague the department as 18 active firefighters, of various ranks, separated service with the Monterey Park Fire Department to accept employment with other fire agencies in the past two year period. Sixteen employees have less than three years experience, not including six current vacancies in the firefighter with paramedic certification rank, and on-going efforts to hire new employees continues to be problematic (Robert Blackwood, Human Resources Director, City of Monterey Park, personal communications, March 15, 2002). Furthermore, the department has faced competition in entry level firefighter hiring practices, having perspective employees turn down job offers to seek employment elsewhere. Coupled with the lack of experience in all ranks, the inconsistent training that has developed and various engine companies performing tasks in a different manner, the Monterey Park Fire Department is quickly developing an identity crises (Tim Murphy, Fire Chief, Monterey Park Fire Department, personal communications, March 14, 2002).

The Corporate Culture Audit was the most telling in regards to the predominant cultural characteristics. Table 5 identifies the mean results to the 22 Corporate Culture

Audit questions, and describes the perception of those within the organization. It becomes obvious that the number of responses that fall in the category of “always a challenge” in regards to the organizational culture demonstrates a need for change.

**Table 5**  
**Corporate Cultural Audit Responses**

Cultural Strengths	1 out of 22	4.5%
Neither Cultural Strength nor Cultural Challenges	1 out of 22	4.5%
Cultural Challenges	20 out of 22	91%

**Note.** Table by author.

### **Question Two**

What is the predominate leadership style?

Based on The Leadership Profile test scores, which evaluates the candidate on a scale of 30 to 70 with 50 being the average, it becomes evident that the self-assessor and the observer’s developed a fairly consistent leadership profile. With the exception of transformational leadership behaviors, all results were well within acceptable limits, demonstrating congruency between the self-assessor and the observers. Table 6 below identifies the leadership profile overall assessment. The findings demonstrate that the Fire Chief has above average transactional leadership capabilities, transformational leadership behaviors and transformational leadership characteristics, however, has developed a discrepancy between his self-evaluation and the evaluation of those he leads.

**Table 6**  
**The Leadership Profile Overall Assessment**

	Self Assessment	Observer's Assessment
Transactional Leadership	57.27	54.44
Transformational Leadership Behaviors	60.78	53.47
Transformational Leadership Characteristics	57.10	52.09

**Note.** Table by author.

The detailed transactional leadership profile identified consistency between the self-assessor and the observers, except in the reward equity rating element. Table 7 identifies the transactional leadership assessment. The data clearly shows that the Fire Chief is average in terms of capable management and above average in terms of reward equity (even given the inconsistency between the self-assessor and observers).

**Table 7**  
**Transactional Leadership Results**

	Self Assessment	Observer's Assessment
Capable Management	51.59	53.20
Reward Equity	62.96	55.68
<b>Overall</b>	<b>57.27</b>	<b>54.44</b>

**Note.** Table by author.

The detailed transformational leadership behaviors identified inconsistency in most rating elements. The leadership communication rating element has identified an extreme discrepancy between the self-assessor and the observers. The inconsistencies in the remaining rating elements demonstrate the tendency of the Fire Chief to evaluate higher than the observers. Table 8 identifies the transformational leadership behaviors.

All rating elements, from both the self-assessor and the observers, were in the average to well above average range, demonstrating fairly effective transformational leadership behaviors.

**Table 8**  
**Transformational Leadership Behavior Results**

	Self Assessment	Observer's Assessment
Leadership Communication	62.05	49.92
Credible Leadership	63.04	56.47
Caring Leadership	63.39	54.34
Creative Leadership	55.65	53.16
<b>Overall</b>	<b>60.78</b>	<b>53.47</b>

**Note.** Table by author.

The detailed transformational leadership characteristics identified consistency in all rating elements except confident leadership. The most extreme discrepancy of all leadership profile rating elements was found in leadership communication. Table 9 identifies the transformational leadership characteristics. The follower-centered leadership rating element and the principled leadership rating element were found to be below average. The remaining rating elements were above average.

**Table 9**  
**Transformational Characteristic Results**

	Self Assessment	Observers Assessment
Confident Leadership	66.18	52.54
Follower Centered Leadership	48.18	49.71
Visionary Leadership	61.78	60.84
Principled Leadership	52.26	45.25
<b>Overall</b>	<b>57.10</b>	<b>52.09</b>

**Note.** Table by author.

### Question Three

What is the Predominant Followership style?

Based on the results of the Performance Relationship Questionnaire, a clear and definitive profile was developed for the Monterey Park Fire Department. A detailed review of the Performance Relationship Questionnaire identifies consistent scores in all eight of the rating elements, which are scored on a scale of one to five. The eight rating elements are then divided into two categories, performance initiative and relationship initiative, which produce the axis lines for a simple line graph. Table 10 identifies the follower profile results. The performance initiative category had rating element scores between 3.00 to 3.80 with the element “self as a resource” scoring the lowest. The relationship initiative category had rating element scores between 3.40 and 4.20 with the element “courageous communication” scoring the lowest.

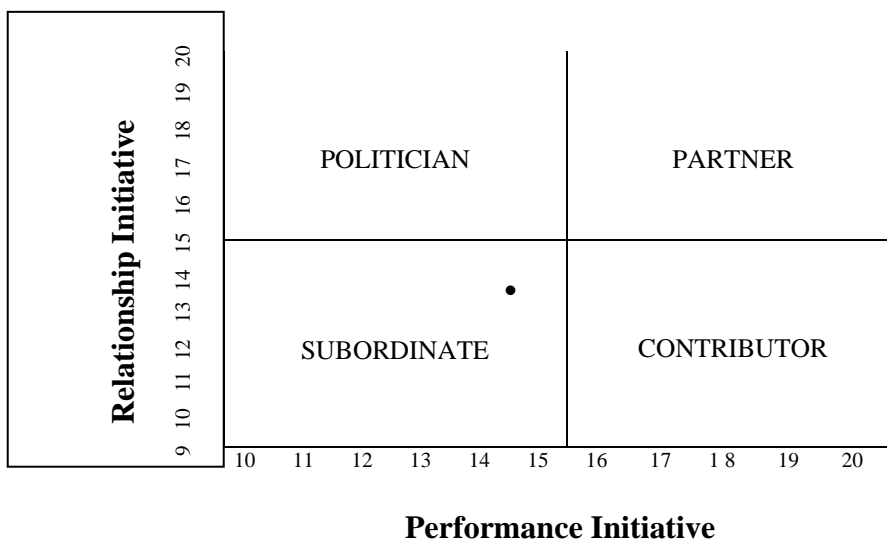
**Table 10**  
**Follower Profile Results**

	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
<b>Performance Initiative</b>			
Embracing Change	3.40	2.40	4.20
Self As A Resource	3.00	2.80	4.80
Working With Others	3.80	3.00	4.40
Doing The Job	3.20	1.80	5.00
<b>Overall</b>	<b>13.40</b>	<b>11.40</b>	<b>17.20</b>
<b>Relationship Initiative</b>			
Courageous Communication	3.40	2.20	4.20
Building Trust	4.20	3.40	5.00
Negotiating Differences	3.60	2.40	4.40
Identifying With The Leader	3.60	1.80	4.40
<b>Overall</b>	<b>14.80</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>16.20</b>

**Note.** Table by author.

The total scores for each category identified the relationship initiative category with an average score 1.40 higher than the performance initiative category. Table 11 identifies the follower style. The end result was a performance initiative average score of 13.40 and a relationship initiative average score of 14.80 categorizing the Monterey Park Fire Department follower style as Subordinate

**Table 11**  
**Follower Style**



- Denotes the group follower style sampled

#### Question Four

What means, if any, can be taken to reinforce and strengthen the organizational culture?

Much like the difficulty of identifying the organizational culture, reinforcing or strengthening the culture can be equally difficult if not more so. According to Senn and Childress “meaningful change in the beliefs, habits, and behaviors of people often comes as a result of significant emotional events” (1999, p. 64). Of course organizations do not intentionally create emotional events as a means of creating change, so the process must stem from other means. Most often change is initiated by the leader as he or she casts

influence across the organization (Senn and Childress, 1999). The Monterey Park Fire Department took the first critical step in the change model and that is to recognize that a problem exists. The subsequent steps will be many and at times difficult, but a reshaping of the culture is mandatory. Area of concern and concentration must include improving organizational communication, improving job performance and expectations, establishing new core values and building trust. This is a daunting task that will require the dedications of all, but through effective team-building workshops the process can begin (Tim Murphy, Fire Chief, Monterey Park Fire Department, personal communications, March 14, 2002).

## **DISCUSSION**

The culture of the Monterey Park Fire Department, based on the interviews and The Corporate Cultural Audit, depict an organization in need of change, which according to Yukl is “one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities” (2000, p. 273).

According to Yukl,

All organizations need to solve problems of internal integration as well as problems of external adaptation. Objectives and strategies cannot be achieved effectively without cooperative effort and reasonable stability of membership in the organization. Internal problems include the criteria for determining membership in the organization, the basis for determining status and power, criteria and procedures for allocating rewards and punishment, an ideology to explain unpredictable and uncontrollable events, rules or customs...the beliefs that develop about these issues serve as the basis for roles expectation and guide

behavior, let people know what is proper and improper, and help people maintain comfortable relationships with each other (2002, p. 279).

Futhermore, according to Senn and Childress,

Changing corporate culture requires a rethinking, a shift in our understanding of people and the people-side of organizational performance...but perhaps the biggest factor in the culture that will instantly spell success or failure for change efforts are the degree of openness and trust and the ability of employees at all levels to engage in frank and honest discussion about the business (1999, p. 25).

The predominant leadership style of the Monterey Park Fire Department, based on interviews and the leadership profile, portray a style that has both strengths and weaknesses. Average to above average scores were noted by the observers and the self-assessor in terms of transactional leadership and transformational leadership characteristics and behaviors, but variances occurred between the two groups performing the evaluation. This variance demonstrates a need for leadership alignment with the organization and its members. According to Cohen there are four action steps to get people to follow you:

(a) make others feel important; people will follow you when you make them feel important (b) Promote your vision; no one will follow you simply because you decide you want to lead (c) Treat others as you would be treated yourself (d) Take responsibility for your actions and those of your group; admit your mistakes and remember you are responsible for everything the members of your group do or fail to do (1990, p. 41).



In addition to the action steps listed above, the leadership should concentrate on developing the skills necessary to sustain and improve organizational growth. According to Townsend and Gebhardt, “learning leadership is an ongoing process. Consciously and unconsciously, thoughts and ideas are continually integrated with responses and instincts into leadership practice...the most effective way to precipitate learning is practice. Leadership skills improve through study and experience” (1997, p. 14).

The predominate followership style of the Monterey Park Fire Department, based on interviews and the Performance Relationship Questionnaire reveals an organization of “subordinates.” This classification possesses a real struggle for the organizational culture as the subordinate followership style, as maintained by Rosenbach, Potter and Pittman, is:

Competent at a satisfactory level but not one to whom the organization looks for leadership...is the only kind of valued follower in hierarchical organizations which operate only with orders from the top and obedience from the bottom...and is also likely the style of a somewhat or completely disaffected follower who is not interested in giving anything extra, or whose job is not one of his or her primary concerns (1999, p. 42-43).

The goal of the Monterey Park Fire Department, in regards to the followership style, must be to develop the human capital of the organization and move the predominant followership style to the “partner” quadrant, where Rosenbach, Potter and Pittman describe followers as “committed to high performance and effective relationships...organizations that anticipate and keep pace with change in the global environment are characterized by leaders who encourage partnership and followers who seek to be partners” (1999, p. 43). The Monterey Park Fire Department, as part of the

team-building process, should look to develop followers, as Kelley describes, “who work well with others when appropriate, rather than compete; to get the job done, rather than vie for power or credit; to stand up for what is right, rather than what gets them promoted; to care in the face of apathy; to know when enough is enough” (1992, p. 27).

It becomes evident that there exists a need for improvement within the organizational cultural of the Monterey Park Fire Department. There is also no doubt that identifying cultural characteristics, leadership styles and followership styles has benefit in the mere recognition of these critical organizational elements. Moreover, it has created a springboard for cognitive and constructive evaluation and implementation possibilities in the arena of team-building and organizational improvement. The identification of these critical elements of culture, leadership and followership has created a stimulus for change. As Covey describes, “our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. We can subordinate feelings to values. We have the initiative and the responsibility to make things happen” (1989, p. 71). It is from these evaluative steps, some of which have been painful to the organization and membership in the identification of significant deficiencies, that a collective effort can be undertaken and a new organizational cause can be championed.

The results of this study have identified opportunities for improvement throughout the organization. Based on the data from The Corporate Cultural Audit, The Leadership Profile and The Performance Relationship Questionnaire, several major deficiencies should be closely examined and addressed during the team-building process. Some problems are related to the organizational culture, some to the leadership style and some to the followership style, demonstrating unilateral concern for improvement needed from

all elements of the Monterey Park Fire Department. Close attention should be paid towards the cultural challenges found in The Corporate Cultural Audit, leadership communication, confident leadership and follower-centered leadership found in the transformational evaluation portion of The Leadership Profile, as well as moving the followership style towards a “partnership” as identified in the Performance Relationship Questionnaire. Also revealed is a clear understanding that there is no means for quick, concise improvement. The team-building process will be an enduring, varying event that should be passed on from generation to generation.

The organizational implications as a result of this study are:

1. Identifying organizational cultural characteristics, primarily those characteristics that pose challenge to the organization, will justify the need for sustained team building and culture changing processes within the Monterey Park Fire Department.
2. Improving the predominate leadership style will encourage the leader to advance the leadership communication skills, confident leadership skills, follower-centered skills, and become a better transformational leader.
3. Improving the predominate followership style will move the organization from a subordinate position to a partnership, making for a more effective Fire Department.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This applied research project was a starting point for the Monterey Park Fire Department to begin a comprehensive team-building process with the goal of improving the organizational culture. This team-building process will include continued evaluation,

input and implementation from all stakeholders, leaders as well as followers, as the organization looks to improve and strengthen its cultural characteristics. By concentrating on the predominant leadership style and the predominant followership style and taking comprehensive steps towards bridging the gap between the two, the organization will develop a leadership-followership match that will result in an improved organizational culture.

The following recommendations should be adopted by the Monterey Park Fire Department:

1. Based on the results of The Corporate Culture Audit, there is a definite line of separation between the leadership and followership, and this separation could cause roadblocks in the team-building process. A workshop between the formal and informal organization (management and union) should be held to assure collective agreement in regards to the inherent good of a comprehensive team-building process. This workshop should include assurance from management that the input and implementation of all stakeholders is needed and welcomed. Management should obtain buy-in from the City Administration as part of the agreement process.
2. The leader and followers of the Department should begin a comprehensive search for a qualified consultant who can aid and assist the organization through the team-building process.
3. Emphasis, for the consultant, should be placed on guidance of the organization, given the fact that any team-building process undertaken will be a long process, requiring the stakeholders to do the real work of improving the culture.

Historically, consultants have been brought into the Department for a myriad of causes, only to find the results ineffective. The followership style of “subordinate” demonstrated that the organization does not go out of its way to work, maintaining the minimum standard. It is critical for the consultant to recognize the followership style and force the followers to break away from their comfort zone to attain more for themselves, thus moving closer to a partnership with the leader.

4. Based on the data collection and research findings, the leader should stress improvement on specific areas of leadership style. Emphasis should be placed on the following:
  - a) Capable Management – day-to-day administrative or managerial tasks.
  - b) Leadership Communication – clear and focused interpersonal communication.
  - c) Confident Leadership – basic sense of self-assurance.
  - d) Follower-Centered Leadership – empowering followers to take an active role in achieving group goals.
  - e) Principled Leadership – develop and support certain shared values and beliefs among group members.
5. Realizing that today’s Fire Departments exist in rapidly changing environments, The Monterey Park Fire Department must enter the team-building process with the understanding that organizational change, if the goal is to have an effective organization, never ends. The consultant will be effective in educating and motivating the stakeholders of the change needed to be an effective organization,

but then it will be up to the stakeholders themselves to carry the change model through the generations.

6. Annual re-evaluation of the predominant leadership style and predominant followership style should be conducted to determine the progress or decline of the team-building process. Based on the results of The Leadership Profile and The Performance Relationship Questionnaire adjustments can be made in the team-building process to assure compliance with the goal of improving the organizational culture.

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